

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

RS20589

This legislation initiates a review process regarding the development of industrial wind farms so the state may adequately update its 2007 Idaho Energy Plan.

When the legislature adopted the 2007 Idaho Energy Plan, it was not contemplated that the proliferation of intermittent wind generation would reach the levels seen today. Because of the increased incentives offered by the federal government since the adoption of the Plan, namely a construction grant to wind developers, it is reasonable to pause and consider the breadth of issues that have now become known with the build-out of wind development that has been seen to date. Those issues include fundamental questions about the need for more intermittent wind power, the effect on regulated utilities, and the higher costs that will be passed on to ratepayers. The issue of local impacts should be analyzed so that it can be determined if a highly subsidized and incentivized industry is being thoroughly considered at the local level to protect the local public interest.

Because of the speed with which the Idaho wind industry has matured, little is known about the impacts industrial wind farms are having on wildlife and threatened and endangered species. Some studies have identified windpower infrastructure as the most imminent threat to sage grouse. It is believed by many that sage grouse should be listed as an endangered species. If that were to occur, the financial impact to the state would be devastating. Clearly, the state of Idaho needs a complete understanding of whether the possibility of the sage grouse listing is being accelerated by the continued development of large wind turbine developments.

This legislation would direct the Legislative Council Interim Committee on Energy, Environment and Technology to conduct the functions included in the legislation.

FISCAL NOTE

The direct costs to the state would be the costs associated with conducting the interim committee meetings.

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